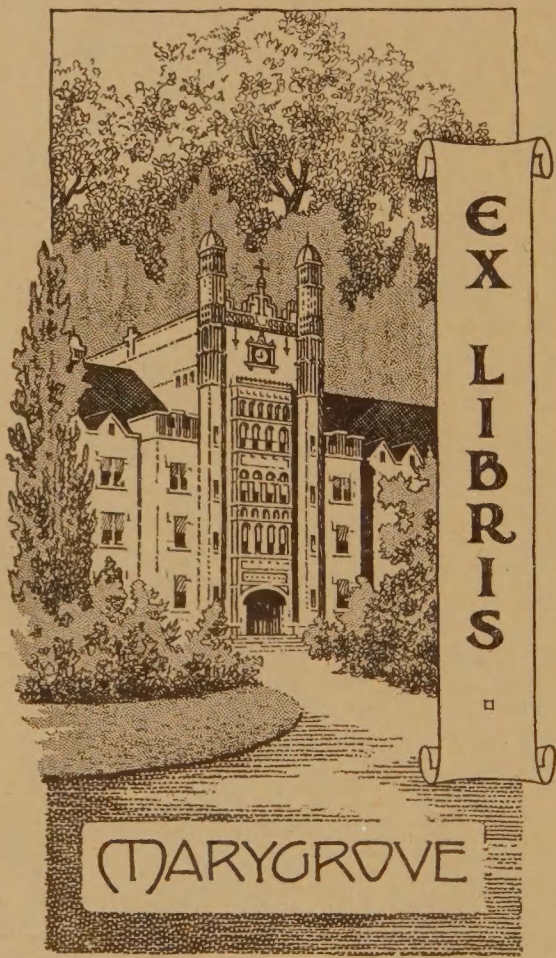


DRAMATIC  
LEGENDS  
AND  
OTHER  
POEMS



PADRAIC  
COLUM



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DRAMATIC LEGENDS  
AND OTHER POEMS

By  
PADRAIC COLUM

WILD EARTH

MOGU THE WANDERER, OR THE DESERT

THE ADVENTURES OF ODYSSEUS

AND THE TALE OF TROY

THE GOLDEN FLEECE

THE KING OF IRELAND'S SON

THE CHILDREN OF ODIN

THE BOY WHO KNEW WHAT THE BIRDS SAID

THE GIRL WHO SAT BY THE ASHES

THE BOY APPRENTICED TO AN ENCHANTER

THE CHILDREN WHO FOLLOWED THE PIPER

# DRAMATIC LEGENDS AND OTHER POEMS

*By*  
PADRAIC COLUM

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## DEDICATION

To M. C. M. C.

The well—

They come to it and take

Their cup-full or their palms-full out of it.

The well—

Stones are around it, and an elder bush

Is there; a high rowan tree; and so

The well is marked.

Who knows

Whence come the waters? Through what  
passages

Beneath? From what high tors

Where forests are? Forests dripping rain!

Branches pouring to the ground; trunks,  
barks, roots,

Letting the streamlets down: Through the  
dark earth

The water flows, and in that secret flood

That's called a spring, that finds this little  
hollow.

Who knows

Whence come the waters that fill cup and  
palm?

Sweetheart and comrade, I give you

The waters' marches and the forest's bound,

The valley-filling cloud, the trees that set

The rains beneath their roots, out of this well.



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POEMS: COUNTRY SONGS



## TO A POET

Below there are white-faced throngs,  
Their march is a tide coming nigher;  
Below there are white-faced throngs,  
Their faith is a banner flung higher;  
Below there are white-faced throngs,  
White swords they have yet, but red  
    songs;  
Place and lot they have lost—hear  
    you not?  
For a dream you once dreamed, and  
    forgot!

## THE STAR

A mighty star has drawn a-near, and is  
Now vibrant in the air:  
The trembling, half-divested trees of his  
Bright presence are aware.

And I behold him in the stream, and see  
Him pass from marge to main:  
What dust will be my flesh and bone ere he,  
That star, is there again!

## LEGEND

There is an hour, they say,  
On which your dream has power:  
Then all you wish for comes,  
As comes the lost field-bird  
Down to the island-lights;  
There is an hour, they say,  
That's woven with your wish:  
In dawn, or dayli' gone,  
In mirk-dark, or at noon,  
In hush, or hum of day,  
May be that secret hour.

A herd-boy in the rain,  
Who looked o'er stony fields;  
A young man in a street,  
When fife and drum went by,  
Making the sunlight shrill;  
A girl in a lane,  
When the long June twilight  
Made friendly, far-off things,  
Had watch upon the hour:  
The dooms they met are in  
The song my grand-dam sings.

## MEN ON ISLANDS

Can it be that never more  
Men will grow on Islands?  
Ithaka and Eriskey,  
Iceland and Tahiti!  
Must the engines he has forged  
Raven so for spaces,  
That the Islands dwindle down,  
Dwindle down!—  
Pots that shelve the tap-root's  
growth?  
Must it be that never more  
Men will flower on Islands?  
Crete and Corsica, Mitylene,  
Aran and Iona!

## GILDEROY

The Smith who made the manacles,  
With bar and bolt, and link and ring,  
Sang out above his hearty blows—  
“I can't have grief for everything.”

As Roger by the rope-walk went  
The bramble bird cheeped up to sing;

He cut the wanted coil, and said—  
“I can’t have grief for everything.”

The Lad who came to Ladder Lane,  
And saw his hemp cravat a-string—  
“Jack’s doom’s Jill’s dole, but then,”  
said he,  
“I can’t have grief for everything.”

And I who carried bag and wig,  
Looked up and saw him turn and swing;  
The dog he gave fixed eyes on me—  
Can I have grief for everything?

### THE RUNE-MASTER<sup>1</sup>

Arch-scholar they ’ll call you,  
Kuno Meyer;  
One knowing the word  
Behind the word;  
Man of learning,  
And of the world too,  
The century’s child.

But who will tell them  
Of the blackbird  
That your heart held?

On an old thorn-tree  
By an ancient rath  
You heard him sing,  
And with runes you charmed him  
Till he stayed with you,  
Giving clear song.

He sang o'er all  
That Maravaun  
Told King Guiré;  
And he told you how  
Bran heard the singing  
Of a lovely woman  
And sailed for Faerie;  
And of how slain princes  
Kept tryst with women  
Loved beyond  
The pain of death,  
In days when still  
The boat of Mananaun  
Bore towards Eirinn!

Arch-scholar they'll call you—  
Nay, Rune-master!  
You read in texts  
Not words only,  
But runes of old time;

And when you spoke them  
A curlew cried  
Over grass-waste Tara,  
And a cuckoo called  
From the height of Cashel,  
And an eagle flew  
From Emain Macha!

*Ochone, ochone!*  
That we'll see no more  
In the Eastern, or  
The Western World  
Your great head over  
The lectern bending,  
Nor hear your lore  
By a pleasant fireside.

But the runes you've read  
Have given us more  
Than the sword might win us:  
May kind saints of Eirinn  
Be beside you  
Where birds on the Living  
Tree sing the Hours.

T. M. K.

Thorough waters, thorough nations I have  
come

To lay last offerings at your low abode,  
Brother, and to appeal  
To ashes that were you.

Since that which none can check has borne  
you

From my regard, poor brother, take these  
gifts—

The tokens that are due  
To ancient pieties.

Yet they are wet, and over-wet with tears,  
With brother's tears; and now I say Farewell:  
Henceforth, and for all time  
Hail, Brother, and Farewell!

### ON THE DEATH OF ROGER CASEMENT

They have hanged Roger Casement to the  
tolling of a bell,

*Ochone, och, ochone, ochone!*

And their Smiths, and their Murrays, and  
their Cecils say it 's well,

*Ochone, och, ochone, ochone!*

But there are outcast peoples to lift that  
spirit high,

Flayed men and breastless women who  
labored fearfully,

And they will lift him, lift him, for the eyes  
of God to see,

And it's well, after all, Roger Casement!

They have ta'en his strangled body and  
have flung it in a pit,

*Ochone, och, ochone, ochone!*

And fire of the quicklime is what they've  
brought to it,

*Ochone, och, ochone, ochone!*

To waste that noble stature, that grave and  
brightening face,

The princely favor also, and the high  
Castilian grace—

Putting courtesy and kindness from emi-  
nence of place—

But they — they die to dust,

While 't was yours to die to fire, Roger  
Casement!

## Wandering and Sojourning 11

---

### WANDERING AND SOJOURNING<sup>2</sup>

#### SPRING

Now, coming on Spring, the days will be  
growing,  
And after Saint Bride's Day my sail I will  
throw;  
Since the thought has come to me I fain would  
be going,  
Till I stand in the middle of the County  
Mayo!

The first of my days will be spent in Clare-  
morris,  
And in Balla, beside it, I'll have drinking and  
sport;  
To Kiltimagh, then, I will go on a visit,  
And there, I can tell you, a month will be  
short.

I solemnly swear that the heart in me rises,  
As the wind rises up and the mists break  
below,  
When I think upon Carra, and on Gallen  
down from it,  
The Bush of the Mile, and the Plains of  
Mayo!

Killeadean's my village, and every good's in  
it,  
The rasp and blackberry to set to one's  
tooth;  
And if Raftery stood in the midst of his people,  
Old age would go from him, and he'd step to  
his youth!

## AUTUMN

A good stay-at-home season is Autumn; then  
there's work to be done by all:  
Speckled fawns, where the brackens make  
covert, range away undeterred;  
And stags that were seen upon hillocks, now  
give heed to the call,  
To the bellowing call of the hinds, and they  
draw back to the herd.

A good stay-at-home season is Autumn; the  
brown world's marked into fields;  
The corn is up to its growth; the acorns teem  
in the wood;  
By the side of the down-fallen fort even the  
thornbush yields  
A crop, and there by the rath the hazel nuts  
drop from a load.

THE POOR GIRL'S MEDITATION<sup>3</sup>

I am sitting here,  
Since the moon rose in the night;  
Kindling a fire,  
And striving to keep it alight:  
The folk of the house are lying  
In slumber deep;  
The cocks will be crowing soon:  
The whole of the land is asleep.

May I never leave this world  
Until my ill-luck is gone;  
Till I have cows and sheep,  
And the lad that I love for my own:  
I would not think it long,  
The night I would lie at his breast,  
And the daughters of spite, after that,  
Might say the thing they liked best.

Love covers up hate,  
If a girl have beauty at all:  
On a bed that was narrow and high,  
A three-month I lie by the wall:  
When I bethought on the lad  
That I left on the brow of the hill,

I wept from dark until dark,  
And my cheeks have the tear-tracks still.

And, O, young lad that I love,  
I am no mark for your scorn:  
All you can say of me  
Is undowered I was born:  
And if I've no fortune in hand,  
Nor cattle nor sheep of my own,  
This I can say, O lad,  
I am fitted to lie my lone!

### LAMENT

I walk by the shore of a lake  
Where stones drag wet through a wood,  
And I hear the cry of a bird—  
*Lone, lone.*

It cries to the lake, and it cries  
To the stones, and it cries to the wood,  
And it cries to my own slow blood—  
*Lone, lone.*

And once I walked by this lake,  
And I heard a like cry from a bird,  
Nor knew what its grief forebode—  
*Gone, gone.*

Now the child who gathered the nuts,  
And brought them to me through the  
wood—

The child who gathered the nuts,  
That day, from our life is gone.

## THE SISTER'S LULLABY

You would not slumber  
If laid at my breast:  
You would not slumber.

My thoughts are strayed birds,  
My blood is possessed:  
You would not slumber.

The rain-drops encumber  
The hawthorn's crest:  
You would not slumber.

The river flood beats  
The swan from her nest:  
You would not slumber.

Times without number  
Has called the woodquest:  
Times without number.

As oft as she called  
To me you were pressed:  
Times without number.

Now you 'd not slumber  
If laid at my breast  
Times without number.

O starling reed-resting,  
I'll rock you to rest:  
So you will slumber.

### OLD SOLDIER

We wander now who marched before,  
Hawking our bran from door to door,  
While other men from the mill take their flour:  
So it is to be an Old Soldier.

Old and sore, one 's like the hound  
Turning upon the stiff frozen ground,  
Nosing the mould, with the night around:  
So it is to be an Old Soldier.

And we who once rang out like a bell,  
Have nothing now to show or to sell;  
Old bones to carry, old stories to tell:  
So it is to be an Old Soldier.

THE WIFE OF TONE<sup>4</sup>

My son I reared ■■ might the brooding  
partridge

Rear up an eaglet fall'n from storm-struck-  
nest:

My son, ah no! one captained for high conflict,  
My chieftain-husband's heir and his bequest.

No mother's part in him did my soul treasure,  
And he would go, and I could stand alone;  
Ah, so I thought, but now my heart-strings  
measure

The love, the loss—my son, my little son,  
thou'rt gone!

I see the grey road winding, winding from me,  
And thou upon it exiled and away,  
I turn unto the darkened house beside me—  
Ah, dark this day as on Wolfe Tone's death's  
day!

But no, no, no! Up from the sod that 's by me,  
Up, up, with glorious singing springs the  
lark—

'Tis Wolfe Tone's spirit, his, to reconcile me,  
And in a sword-flash, gone, the loneliness,  
the dark!

## THE FAIR HILLS OF EIRÉ

Bear the love of my heart to my land far  
away,  
And the fair hills of Eiré O,  
And to all of Eivir's race that in her valleys  
stay,  
And the fair hills of Eiré O.  
That land of mine beloved, where the brown  
thrush's song  
Fills hazel glen and ivied close the Summer  
twilight long:  
Oh, how woeful swells his music for the  
downfall of the Strong,  
On the fair hills of Eiré O!

'Tis my lone soul's long sorrow that I must  
still be far  
From the fair hills of Eiré O,  
Nor watch a maiden coming as through the  
mist a star,  
On the fair hills of Eiré O!

Oh, the honey in her tree-tops where her  
oak-woods darkly grow,  
And the freshness of her cresses where her  
clear well-waters flow,  
And the lushness of her meadows where her  
soft-eyed cattle low,  
On the fair hills of Eiré O!

SHALL I GO BOUND AND YOU GO  
FREE?

“Shall I go bound and you go free,  
And love one so removed from me?  
Not so; the falcon o’er my brow  
Hath better quest, I dare avow!

“And must I run where you will ride,  
And must I stay where you abide?  
Not so, the feather that I wear  
Is from an Eyrne in the air!

“And must I climb a broken stair,  
And must I pace a chamber bare?  
Not so, the Brenny plains are wide,  
And there are banners where I ride!”



CREATURES AND THINGS  
SEEN



## THE WILD ASS

The wild ass lounges, legs struck out  
In vagrom unconcern:

The tombs of Achæmedian kings  
Are for those hooves to spurn.

And all of rugged Tartary  
Lies with him on the ground,  
The Tartary that knows no awe,  
That has nor ban nor bound.

The wild horse from the herd is plucked  
To bear a saddle's weight;  
The boar is one keeps covert, and  
The wolf runs with a mate;

But he's the solitary of space,  
Curbless and unbeguiled;  
The only being that bears a heart  
Not recreant to the wild.

## THE VULTURES

Foul-feathered and scald-necked,  
They sit in evil state;  
Raw marks upon their breasts  
As on men's wearing chains.

Impure, though they may plunge  
Into the morning's springs,  
And spirit-dulled, though they  
Command the heavens' heights.

Angels of Foulness, ye,  
So fierce against the dead!  
Sloth on your muffled wings,  
And speed within your eyes!

### THE BISON

How great a front is thine—  
A lake of majesty!  
Assyria knew the sign—  
The god-incarnate king!

A lake of majesty—  
The lion's drowns in it!  
And thy placidity—  
A moon within that lake!

As if thou still dost own  
A world, thou takest breath—  
Earth-shape, and strength of stone,  
A Titan-sultan's child!

## THE PIGEONS

Odalisques, odalisques,  
Treading the pavement  
With feet pomegranate-stained:  
When we 'd less years  
We bartered for, bought you—  
Ah, then, we knew you,  
Odalisques, odalisques,  
Treading the pavement  
With feet pomegranate-stained!

Queens of the air,—  
Aithra, Iole,  
Eos or Auge,  
Taking new beauty  
From the sun's evening brightness,  
Gyring in light  
As nymphs play in waters—  
Aithra, Iole,  
Eos or Auge!

Then down on our doorsteps,  
Gretchen and Dora . . .

## THE BIRD OF PARADISE

With sapphire for her crown,  
And with the Libyan wine  
For lustre of her eyes;  
With azure for her feet  
(It is her henna stain);  
Then iris for her vest,  
Rose, ebony, and flame,  
She lives a thing enthralled,  
In forests that are old,  
As old as is the moon.

## THE HUMMING BIRD

Up from the navel of the world,  
Where Cuzco has her founts of fire,  
The passer of the Gulf he comes.

He lives in air, a bird of fire,  
Charted by flowers still he comes,  
Through spaces that are half the world.

With glows of suns and seas he comes;  
A life within our shadowed world  
That's bloom, and gem, and kiss of fire!

THE MONKEYS

Two little creatures  
With faces the size of  
A pair of pennies  
Are clasping each other:  
“Ah, do not leave me,”  
One says to the other,  
In the high monkey-  
Cage in the beast-shop.

There are no people  
To gape at them now,  
For people are loth to  
Peer in the dimness;  
Have they not builded  
Streets and playhouses,  
Sky-signs and bars  
To lose the loneliness  
Shaking the hearts  
Of the two little monkeys?

Yes. But who watches  
The penny-small faces  
Can hear the voices:  
“Ah, do not leave me;  
Suck I will give you,

Warmth and clasping,  
And if you slip from  
This beam, I can never  
Find you again."

Dim is the evening,  
And chill is the weather;  
There, drawn from their colored  
Hemisphere,  
The apes liliputian  
With faces the size of  
A pair of pennies,  
And voices as low as  
The flow of my blood.

### IN THE CAROLINA WOODS

Not in a cavern where the winds  
Trample with battle call—  
But in these woods, in these deep woods  
Where branch and branch let fall  
Not moss, but grey and cobweb beards,  
Kings' cabalistic beards—

Here you should lie, you kings of eld,  
Barbarossa, Boabdil,

And Czar Lazar, and Charlemagne; Arthur  
and Gaelic Finn —  
Here where the muffling Spanish moss  
Forests with forests fill.

## AN INDIAN SHOWING FEATS

The quickness that he won in the death  
chase,  
Out on the plains, five hundred moons  
ago;  
The hardness wrought by hungers, and the  
skill  
That notched the hardness, arrow to that  
bow:

He shows them these, while these depart  
from him,  
Like warriors softly shod, with bodies bent;  
They reach the mesa bluff; around it howl  
Coyotes, in long, lonely discontent.

## THE HORNET'S NEST ✓

—How strangely like a churchyard skull,  
The thing that's there amongst the leaves!

—A hornet's nest; but stir the branch  
And they 'll be round your head and ears!

—Livid, uneyed, articulate,  
How like a skull their nests are made!

—How like to hornets' nests the skulls  
On many a one that still has flesh!

## REMINISCENCE



## REMINISCENCE

## I

*The Swallows sang*

Alien to us are

Your fields, and your cotes, and your  
glebes;

Secret our nests are

Although they be built in your eaves;  
Uneaten by us are

The grains that grow in your fields.

*The Weathercock on the  
barn answered*

Not alien to ye are

The powers of un-earth-bound beings:  
Their curse ye would bring

On our cotes, and our glebes, and our  
fields,

If aught should befall

The brood that is bred in the eaves.

*The Swallows answered*

If aught should befall

Our brood that's not traveled the seas,

Your temples would fall,  
And blood ye would milk from your  
beeves:

Against them the curse we would bring  
Of un-earth-bound beings!

## II

The blackbird there was singing,  
"Oh, now you know my sort;  
I'd rather have a guinea  
Than I would a five pound note.

"For a guinea it would sink,  
And a note it would swim;  
And yellow is a guinea,  
And yellow is my bill.

"And since you've heard my singing,  
And since you know my sort,  
You'd better leave your guinea,  
And take your five pound note."

## III

I saw the wind to-day:  
I saw it in the pane  
Of glass upon the wall:

A moving thing, — 'twas like  
No bird with widening wing,  
No mouse that runs along  
The meal bag under the beam.

I think it like a horse,  
All black, with frightening mane,  
That springs out of the earth,  
And tramples on his way.  
I saw it in the glass,  
The shaking of a mane:  
A horse that no one rides!

## IV

Meet for a town where pennies have few pairs  
In children's pockets, this toy-booth with its  
wares—

Jew's harps and masks and kites,  
And paper-lanterns with their farthen-lights,  
All in a dim-lit window to be seen;

Within—

The walls that have the patches of the damp,  
The counter where there burns the murky  
lamp,

And then, the counter and the shelf between—  
The dame,  
Meager, grey-polled, lame.

So she is here since times legendary—  
A bird of little worth, a sparrow, say,  
Whose crib 's in some neglected passage-way,  
And one 's left wondering who brings crumbs  
to her;

Soft-voiced and friendly-spoken, she will hop  
The inches of her crib, this narrow shop  
When you step in to be her customer.

How's custom? Bad enough; she had not  
sold

Six kites this windy year for boys to hold—  
She sold kites by the gross in times ago;  
Marbles, none at all—

The children had no money to make call.

Wasn't it poor, the town,

Where boys

Could not buy marbles, leaving other toys  
Like tops and balls—

Where little girls could hardly pay for dolls?

But she's not tragical—no, not a bit—

She laughs as she talks to you—that is it!

Her eyes are like the farthen-candle's light

In paper-lanterns when they burn bright;

And she herself is like a kite upborne,

A paper-kite held by a string that's worn;

And like a Jew's harp when you strike its  
tongue—  
That way her voice goes on!

Well, Miler Dowdall, the great pugilist,  
Who had the world once beneath his fist,  
Would step in here to buy his pockets full;  
We used to see him with deft hands held up  
To win the champion's belt or silver cup,  
Upon the hoardings on our way to school;  
Now Miler's is a name that's blown by!

How strange to think that she is still inside  
After so many turns of the tide—  
Since this lit window was a dragon's eye  
To turn us all to wonder coming nigh—  
Since this dim window was a dragon's eye!

## V

Over old walls the Laburnums  
hang cones of fire;  
Laburnums that grow out of old  
mould in old gardens:

Old men and old maids who have money or  
pensions  
Have shuttered themselves in the pales of old  
gardens.

The gardens grow wild; out of their mould the  
Laburnums

Draw cones of fire.

And we, who 've no lindens, no palms, no cedars of Lebanon,

Rejoice you have gardens with mould, old men and old maids:

The bare and the dusty streets have now the  
Laburnums,

Have now cones of fire!

## VI

Down a street that once I lived in  
You used pass, a honey-seller,  
And the town in which that street was  
Was the shabbiest of all places;  
You were different from the others  
Who went by to barter meanly:  
Different from the man with colored  
Windmills for the children's pennies;  
Different from the drab purveyor  
With her paper screens to fill up  
Chill and empty fireplaces.

You went by, a man upstanding,  
On your head a wide dish, holding

Dark and golden lumps of honey;  
You went slowly, like an old horse  
That 's not driven any longer,  
But that likes to take an amble.

No one ever bought your honey,  
No one ever paid a penny  
For a single comb of sweetness;  
Every house was grim unto you  
With foregone desire of eating  
Bread whose taste had sweet of honey.

Yet you went, a man contented  
'S though you had a king to call on  
Who would take you to his parlor,  
And buy all your stock of honey.  
On you went, and in a sounding  
Voice just like the bell of evening,  
Told us of the goods you carried,  
Told us of the dark and golden  
Treasure dripping on your wide dish.

You went by, and no one named you!

## VII

"The bond-woman comes to the boorie;  
She sings with a heart grown wild,  
How a hundred rivers are flowing  
Between herself and her child.

“Then comes the lad with the hazel,  
And the folding-star is in the rack;  
‘Night ’s a good herd’ to the cattle,  
He sings ‘She brings all things back.’ ”

## VIII

The crows still fly to that wood, and out of  
that wood she comes,  
Carrying her load of sticks, a little less now  
than before,  
Her strength being less; she bends as the  
hoar rush bends in the wind;  
She will sit by the fire, in the smoke, her  
thoughts on the root and the living  
branch no more.

The crows still fly to that wood, that wood  
that is sparse and gapped;  
The last one left of the herd makes way by  
the lane to the stall,  
Lowling distress as she goes; the great trees  
there are all down;  
No fiddle sounds in the hut to-night, and a  
candle only gives light to the hall.

The trees are sparse and gapped, yet a  
sapling spreads on the joints

Of the wall, till the castle stones fall down  
into the moat:

The last one who minds that our race once  
stood as a spreading tree,

She goes, and thorns are bare, where the  
blackbird, his full songs done, strikes  
one metal note.

## IX

The Mountain Thrush I say,  
But I am thinking of her, Nell the Rambler:  
She 'd come down to our houses bird-alone,  
From some haunt that was hers, and we would  
see her

Drawing the water from the well one day,  
For one house or another, or we 'd hear her  
Garrulous with the turkeys down the street,  
We children.

From neighbour's house to neighbour's house  
she 'd go

Until one day we 'd see  
Her worn cloak hanging behind our door;  
And then, that night, we 'd hear  
Of Earl Gerald: how he rides abroad,  
His horse's hooves shod with the weighty  
silver,

And how he 'll ride all roads till those silver  
shoes

Are worn thin;

As thin as the cat's ears before the fire,  
Upraised in such content before the fire,  
And making little lanterns in the firelight.

The Mountain Thrush, when every way 's a  
hard one,

Hops on in dumbness till a patch of sunlight,  
Falling, will turn her to a wayside song:

So it was with her, Rambler Nell, a shelter,  
A bit upon the board, and she flowed on  
With Rambler's discourse—tales, and rhymes,  
and sayings,

With child's light in her worn eyes, and  
laughter

To all her words.

The lore she had—

'Twas like a kingly robe, on which long rains  
Have fallen and fallen, and parted

The finely woven web, and have washed away  
The kingly colors, but have left some threads  
Still golden, and some feathers still as shining  
As the kingfisher's. While she sat there, not  
spinning,

Not weaving anything but her own fancies,  
We ate potatoes out of the ash, and thought  
    them  
Like golden apples out of Tiprobane.

When winter's over-long, and days that  
    famish  
Come one upon another like snow-flakes,  
The Mountain Thrush makes way down to  
    our houses:  
Takes doorstep-shelter,  
Hops round for crumbs, and stays ■ while a  
    comer  
Upon our floors.

She did not think  
Bread of dependence bitter; three went with  
    her—  
Hunger, Sorrow, and Loneliness, and they  
Had crushed all that makes claims, though  
    they'd not bent her,  
Nor emptied her of trust—what was it led  
    her  
From house to house, but that she always  
    looked for  
A warmer welcome at the hearth ahead?

So she went on until it came one day  
The Mountain Thrush's heart-stop on the  
way.

## X

An old man said, "I saw  
The chief of the things that are gone;  
A stag with head held high,  
A doe, and a fawn;

"And they were the deer of Ireland  
That scorned to breed within bound:  
The last; they left no race  
Tame on a pleasure ground.

"A stag, with his hide all rough  
With the dew, and a doe and a fawn;  
Nearby, on their track on the mountain  
I watched them, two and one,

"Down to the Shannon going—  
Did its waters cease to flow,  
When they passed, they that carried the  
    swiftness,  
And the pride of long ago?

“The last of the troop that had heard  
Finn’s and Oscar’s cry;  
A doe and a fawn, and before,  
A stag with head held high!”

## XI

“A Stranger you came to me over the Sea,  
But welcome I made you, Seumas-a-ree,  
And shelter I gave you, my sons set to ward  
you,  
Red war I faced for you, Seumas-a-ree.

“Now a craven you go from me, over the  
sea,  
But my best sons go with you, Seumas-a-ree;  
Foreign graves they will gain, and for those  
who remain  
The black hemp is sown—och, Seumas-a-ree!

“But the Boyne shall flow back from the far  
Irish Sea,  
On the causeway of Aughrim our victory  
shall be:  
Two centuries of years and the child on the  
knee  
Will be rocked to this cronach, Seumas-  
a-ree!”

## XII

You blew in

Where Jillin Brady kept up state on nothing,  
Married her daughter, and brought to Jillin's  
house

A leash of dogs, a run of ferrets, a kite  
In a wired box; linnets and larks and gold-  
finches

In their proper cages, and you brought with  
you this song:

If you come to look for me,  
Perhaps you 'll not me find:  
For I 'll not in my Castle be—  
Inquire where horns wind.

Before I had a man-at-arms  
I had an eager hound:  
Then was I known as Reynardine,  
In no crib to be found.

You used to say

Five hounds' lives were a man's life, and  
when Teague

Had died of old age, and when Fury that was  
a pup

When Teague was maundering, had turned  
from hill to hearth

And lay in the dimness of a hound's old age,

I went with you again, and you were upright  
As the circus rider standing on his horse;  
Quick as a goat that will take any path, and  
lean—

Lean as a lash; you would have no speech  
With wife or child or mother-in-law, till you  
Were out of doors and standing on the ditch,  
Ready to face the river or the hill—

The Hen-wife's son once heard the  
grouse  
Talk to his soft-voiced mate;  
And what he heard the heath-poult  
say,  
The loon would not relate.

Impatient in the yard he grew,  
And patient on the hill;  
Of cocks and hens he 'd take no  
charge,  
And he went with Reynardine.

Lean days when we were idle as the birds,  
That will not preen their feathers, but will  
travel

To taste a berry, or pull a shred of wool  
That they will never use. We pass the  
bounds:

A forest's grave, the black bog, is before us,

And in its very middle you will show me  
The snipe's nest that is lonelier than the  
snipe

That 's all that 's there; and then a stony  
hill,

A red fox climbing, pausing, looking round his  
tail

At us travailing against wind and rain  
To reach the river-spring where Finn or Fer-  
gus

Hardened a spear, back of a thousand years.

And still your cronies are what they were  
then—

The hounds that know the hill and know the  
hearth;

(One is Fury that 's as old as Argos now

That crawled to Odysseus coming back);

Your minstrels, the blackbird singing still

When kites are leaving, crows are going  
home,

And the thrush in the morning like a spectre  
showing

Beside the day-spring; and your visitors,

The cuckoo that will swing upon a branch,

The corncrake with quick head between the  
grass-tufts.

And still your song is what it used to be—  
About that Reynardine who came to lord  
A Castle (O that Castle with its trees!),  
Who heard the horns, and let his turret  
grow

The foxglove where his banner should be  
seen:

The hawk is for the hill, he cried,  
The badger for the glen;  
The otter for the river-pools—  
Amen, amen, amen!

### XIII

It would not be far for us to go back to the  
age of bronze:

Then you were a King's daughter; your father  
had curraghs on shore,

A herd of horses, good tillage upon the face  
of the hills,

And clumps of cattle beyond them—the  
black and broad-horned kine.

And I, I was good at the bow, but had no men,  
no herds,

And you would have been bestowed in a while  
on some unrenowned

Ulysses, or on the old King to whom they  
afterwards raised  
Three stones as high as the elk's head (this  
cromlech where we now sit).

How fair you were when you walked there  
beside the old forest trees!  
So fair that I thought you would change and  
fly away a white swan!  
And then we were mates for play; all-eagle  
thereafter you grew  
To drive me to range the tempest, King's  
child of the hero-age!

I called three times as an owl: through the  
gaps where the herders watched  
You ran, and we climbed the height where  
the brackens pushed at our knees;  
And we lay where the brackens drew the  
earth-smell out of the earth,  
And we journeyed and baffled the fighters of  
ill-wishing Kings!

It would not be far for us to go back to the  
age of bronze!  
The fire left there by the nomads is lone as a  
burning ship!

We eat them as we fare along, green ears of  
the wild wheat;  
At last, a King, I relieve a good clan from a  
dragon's spleen!

Pieces of amber I brought you, big as a bow-  
man's thumbs,  
Trumpets I left beside you, wrought when the  
smiths had all art,  
A dancing-bird that I caught you—they are  
in the age of bronze:  
I bring you; you bring me again, the love, the  
triumph, the strife!

## XIV

"The blackbird's nest in the briar,  
The sea-gulls' nests on the ground—  
They're nests, and they're more than nests,"  
said he,

"They are tokens I have found.

"Here, where the rain-dashed briar is  
A mark in the empty glade,  
The blackbird's nest is seen," he said,  
"Clay-rimmed, uncunningly made;

“By the inland lake, its shore,  
Where the surgeless water shoves,  
The sea-gulls have their nests,” he said,  
As low as the cattles’ hooves.”

I heard a poet say it,  
The sojourner of a night;  
His head was up to the rafter,  
Where he stood in a candle’s light.

“Your houses are like the sea-gulls’  
Nests—they are scattered and low;  
Like the blackbirds’ nests in the briar,” he  
said,  
“Uncunningly made—even so.

“But close to the ground are reared  
The wings that have widest sway,  
And the birds that sing best in the wood,”  
he said,  
“Were bred with their breasts to the clay.

“You’ve wildness—I’ve turned it to song;  
You’ve strength—I’ve turned it to wings;  
The welkin’s for your conquest then,  
The wood to your music rings;

“Till your salt shall lose its savor,  
And your virgin soil be cropped;  
Till you own like other peoples;  
And the breath of your need be stopped.”

I heard a poet say it,  
The sojourner of a night;  
His head was up to the rafter  
Where he stood in a candle's light.



## DRAMATIC LEGENDS



SWIFT'S PASTORAL

*A story that has for its background Saint Patrick's Purgatory.*

CHARACTERS: *Jonathan Swift and Esther Vanhomrigh.*

ESTHER

I know the answer: 'tis ingenious.  
I 'm tired of your riddles, Doctor Swift.

SWIFT

Faith, so am I.

ESTHER

But that 's no reason why you 'll be splenetic.

SWIFT

Then let us talk.

ESTHER

But will you talk, too? Oh, is there nothing  
For you to show your pupil on this highway?

SWIFT

The road to Dublin, and the road that leads  
Out of this sunken island.

ESTHER

I see a Harper:  
A Harper and a country lout, his fellow,  
Upon the highway.

SWIFT

I know the Harper.

ESTHER

The Doctor knows so much, but what of that?  
He 'll stay splenetic.

SWIFT

I have seen this Harper  
On many a road. I know his name, too—  
I know a story that they tell about him.

ESTHER

And will it take the pucker off his brow  
If Cadenus to Vanessa tell the tale?

SWIFT

God knows it might! His name 's O'Caro-  
lan—  
Turlough O'Carolan; and there is a woman  
To make the story almost pastoral.

ESTHER

Some Sheelah or some Oonagh, I 'll engage.

SWIFT

Her name

Was Bridget Cruise. She would not wed him,  
And he wed one who had another name,  
And made himself a Minstrel, but a Minstrel  
Of consequence. His playing on the harp  
Was the one glory that in Ireland stayed  
After lost battles and old pride cast down.

Where he went men would say:

“Horses we may not own, nor swords may  
carry,

But Turlough O'Carolan plays upon the harp,  
And Turlough O'Carolan's ten fingers bring us  
Horses and swords, gold, wine, and victory.”

ESTHER

Oh, that is eloquence!

SWIFT

I know their rhapsodies. But to O'Carolan:  
He played, and drank full cups; made proper  
songs

In praise of banquets, wine-cups, and young  
maids—

Things easily praised. And then when he  
was old—

ESTHER

How old?

SWIFT

Two score of years and ten.

ESTHER

But that 's not old!

SWIFT

And that 's not old! Good God, how soon  
we grow

Into the Valley of the Shadow of Death!—  
Not into the Valley, Vanessa, mark, of Death,  
But into the shadow! Two score of years and  
ten—

Have we not three score and some more to  
live?

So has the tree that 's withered at the top—  
Dead in the head! Aye, we, Vanessa, grow  
Into the Shadow, and in the Shadow stay  
So long!

ESTHER

I thought the story would divert Cadenus.

SWIFT

It will, it will, Vanessa. What was I  
Just saying?

ESTHER

When he was old—

SWIFT

When he was old  
And blind—did I say he was blind?

ESTHER

You did not say it.

SWIFT

He 's blind—not book-blind, but stone-blind.  
He cannot see  
The wen that makes two heads upon the  
fellow  
That goes beside him, hunched up with the  
harp;  
He cannot see  
The Justice to the assizes riding  
With soldiers all in red to give him state.  
He cannot see  
The beggar's lice and sores.

I tell a story:

When this O'Carolan was old and blind,  
As I have said, he made the pilgrimage:  
'Twas to . . . No, no, 'twas not the place  
That I'm proscribed to, but yet one that 's  
called  
Saint Patrick's Purgatory.

'Tis on an island in a lake, a low  
Island or islet. The water round  
Is dun, unsunned; there are no meadows near,  
No willows grow, no lark nor linnet sings;  
The banks there take a bleakness from the  
clouds.

A fissure in the island leads down to  
The Purgatory of Souls, their fable says.

And now the Harper is but one of those,  
The countless wretches, who have brought  
their sores  
To that low island, and brought darkened  
spirits—  
Such stream has flowed there for ■ thousand  
years.

I do not know  
What length of time the Harper stays, while  
crowds  
Are shambling all around him, weeping,  
praying,  
Famishing themselves; or drinking the dun  
water  
Of the lake for wine; or kneeling, with their  
knees  
On sharpened stones; or crowded  
In narrow, stony cells.

ESTHER

It is ■ place  
Papistical.

SWIFT

It is a place  
Most universal. Do we not walk  
Upon a ground that's drenched with tears,  
and breathe  
An air that's thickened with men's darkened  
spirits?  
Aye, and on an islet,  
Suffering pain, and hearing cries of wretches:  
Cut off, remote, banished, alone, tormented!  
Name the place as you will, or let it be  
Saint Patrick's Purgatory.

But comes ■ time the blind man rows to shore  
From that low island. He touches shore, and  
cries  
"Hands for a blind man's help!" and hands  
were held him—  
He touched ■ hand.

Here then 's the pastoral  
The hand, the fingers of the hand, the clasp,  
The spirit flowing through—he knew them  
all;

He knew all well, and in an instant knew  
    them,  
And he cried out, "The hand of Bridget  
    Cruise!"

Oh, in the midmost of our darkened spirits  
To touch a hand, and know the truth within  
    it—  
That truth that's clasped, that holds, the  
    truth that's all  
For us—for every day we live, the truth!  
To touch that hand, and then once more to  
    turn—  
To turn around upon the world's highway,  
And go alone—poor hand, poor hand!

But she  
This Bridget Cruise, was leaving that dull  
    shore  
For that low island, and had cares beyond  
The memory of O'Carolan. Well, they  
    passed,  
He going and she coming; well, and then  
He took his harp, and the country lout, his  
    fellow,  
Went with him, as we see them going now.

ESTHER

They've passed: there is no one now beside us.  
And will you take my hand? You used to  
call me

A white witch, but there is no witchery  
In this plain hand of mine!

You've told a double story, Doctor Swift.

## THE BIRD OF JESUS

It was pure indeed,  
The air we breathed in, the light we saw,  
I and my brother, when we played that day,  
Or piped to one another; then there came  
Two young lads of an age with one another,  
And with us two, and these two played with  
us,  
And went away.

Each had a bearing that was like a prince's,  
Yet they were simple lads and had the kind-  
ness

Of our own folk—lads simple and unknowing:  
Then, afterwards, we went to visit them.

Theirs was a village that was not far off,  
But out of reach—toward elbow, not toward  
hand:

And what was there were houses—  
Houses and some trees—  
And it was like a place within ■ fold.

We found the lads,  
And found them still as simple and unknow-  
ing,  
And played with them: we played outside the  
stall  
Where worked the father of the wiser lad—  
Not brothers were the boys, but cousins'  
children.

There was a pit:  
We brought back clay and sat beside the stall,  
And made birds out of clay; and then my  
brother  
Took up his bird and flung it in the air:  
His playmate did as he,  
And clay fell down upon the face of clay.

And then I took  
The shavings of the board the carpenter  
Was working on, and flung them in the air,  
And watched them streaming down.

There would be nought to tell  
Had not the wiser of the lads took up  
The clay he shaped: a little bird it was;  
He tossed it from his hand up to his head:  
The bird stayed in the air.

O what delight we had  
To see it fly and pause, that little bird,  
Sinking to earth sometimes, and sometimes  
    rising  
As though to fly into the very sun;  
At last it spread out wings and flew, and  
    flew,  
Flew to the sun!

I do not think  
That we played any more, or thought of play-  
    ing,  
For every drop of blood our bodies held  
Was free and playing, free and playing  
    then.  
Four lads together on the bench we sat:  
Nothing was in the open air around us,  
And yet we thought something was there for  
    us—  
A secret, charmed thing.

So we went homeward; by soft ways we went  
That wound us back to our familiar place.

Some increase lay upon the things we saw:  
I'll speak of grasses, but you'll never know  
What grass was there; words wither it and  
make it

Like to the desert children's dream of grass;  
Lambs in the grass, but I will not have told  
you

What fleece of purity they had to show;  
I'll speak of birds, but I will not have told you  
How their song filled the heart; and when I  
speak

Of him, my brother, you will never guess  
How we two were at one!

Even to our mother we had gained in grace!

#### THE LAMENTS OF QUEEN GORMLAI<sup>5</sup>

Thou art lone to-night and unlit; no more  
than a cairn art thou

To the dead, O House of Kings!

Thou that didst have thy feasts, thou that  
didst have thy glow,

Thou art lone to-night and unlit!

## Lament of Queen Gormlai 69

---

Every Kingdom must pass; one Kingdom,  
one only, endures!

Thou art lone to-night and unlit, and I am  
remembering Niall!

### II

Din of a wedding there! To whomsoever it  
brings

Delight, there is one to whom each loud  
voice brings a grief:

O woman, handfasted, besought—the like  
my lot was once!

And Thou, the Giver of Dooms! Thou hast  
deserved from me

Reproach, why didst thou slay King Aedh's  
upright son?

Were he in captor's hands, gold and swift  
steeds would go

To ransom him, and more—all men's remem-  
brances!

Were he in captor's hands, and then were he  
set free

Unransomed, 'twere the meed of all that he  
bestowed!

And I, what would I bring to ransom him who  
gave

Out of one spoil to me no less than twelve  
score kine?

White bed on which he lay—white bed to  
which would come

The men of Oriel—thou art now without thy  
pride!

A grief it is to me, white one, to see thee thus!  
His tunic is beside, but he who made it brave  
In Cenannas now lies, alone, and cold, and  
dead.

When once my hero went in battle from  
Armagh,

He said, "If one meet death, and one of us  
abide

What should the living do?" I answered him,  
"O King,

If one should meet with death, let both of us  
be brought

To share a single grave in Aileach's quiet  
ground."

"If thou, O Gormlai, be first that's laid in  
earth,

No woman will I take, no mirth henceforth  
I'll know."

III

Lift thy foot, take it away,  
From my Niall's side, O Monk:  
Too heavily thou heapest clay,  
O Monk!

Too long, I think, thou hast been nigh,  
Heaping clay on Niall's grave:  
At his side I used to lie,  
O Monk!

Too long has he, my bosom's friend,  
Been in the dark, there where his feet  
Do not reach the coffin's end,  
Too long.

Not by my good will his head  
Is underneath that cross you raise:  
Nor that the flagstone on his bed  
Is placed.

Like to Deirdre when she stood  
Watching Naisi's burial,  
Till her heart burst out in blood,  
I stand.

I am Gormlai, she who made  
Verses that the learned knew:  
Would that upon me were laid  
That stone.

Lift thy foot, take it away,  
From my Niall's side, O Monk:  
Too long hast thou been heaping clay:  
Lift thy foot!

## IV

A man's hound  
Is given no credit where it's not been followed:  
Outlandish and disturbing it will seem.

And one unloved—  
Her presence draws affronts to corner and  
nook,  
Even as the hound whose course has not  
been told.

Should I say  
The raven's black, they 'll hurtle around my  
words:  
White feathers they will throw into my face.

## Lament of Queen Gormlai 73

---

Be my walk  
Crooked or straight, be it queenly or abased,  
The Leinstermen will say it is my spite.

Bare yon hill  
That 's had its copse stripped off; the  
    shoulder 's bare  
Where there is none to put an arm across.

Open 's the warp  
Upon the gears—a tale they tell in this  
    house—  
Where children there are none to weave a  
    strength.

As it 's with a man:  
Out of all women he 's matched with only one;  
And as a woman 's mated with one man.

So was Niall  
The unstained King, the bounteous, upright  
    man  
A match for me, and I a match for him.

Long am I  
In Muiregan's house: worn am I: I cannot  
Abide with them, I with my broken days.

## THE MIRACLE OF THE CORN\*

*People in the Legend:*

FARDORROUGHA	A Farmer
SHEILA	Fardorrougha's wife
PAUDEEN	Fardorrougha's servant, a Fool
AISLINN	A child
THREE WOMEN	
SHAUN O' THE BOG	A Poor Man

*The action passes in a Farmer's house in Ireland in the old times.*

SCENE: *The interior of Fardorrougha's house. The door is at back R; the hearth L, the window R are only conventionally represented. What is actually shown is a bin for corn, shelves with vessels, benches, and a shrine. The bin projects from back C; the shelves with vessels are each side of the bin; the shrine is R; it holds a small statue of the Virgin; a rosary of large beads hangs from it; the benches are R and L. One is at the conventional fireplace,*

\*Corn is used in the sense of any kind of grain—as it is used in Ireland and England—the bread-stuff and the symbol of fertility.

*and the other is down from the conventional door.*

*All the persons concerned in the action are on the scene when it opens, and they remain on the scene. They only enter the action when they go up to where the bin is. Going back to the places they had on the benches takes them out of the action.*

*On the bench near the hearth sit the people of Fardorrougha's household—Fardorrougha, Sheila, Paudeen, Aislinn. On the bench near the door sit the strangers—three women, one of whom has a child with her, and Shaun o' the Bog. The people are dressed in greys and browns, and brown is the color of the interior. The three women and Shaun o' the Bog are poorly dressed; the women are barefooted. Paudeen is dressed rudely, and sandals of hide are bound across his feet. Fardorrougha, Sheila, and Aislinn are comfortably dressed.*

PAUDEEN

They're moaning still:

The cattle are a long time moaning now,  
Day in, day out; and will they never stop  
Their moaning, Master Fardorrougha?

FARDORROUGHA

We could drive the cows

To another place, but the house would not  
be safe

While we were gone; Paudeen, you know

There are those outside who would break in  
my door.

PAUDEEN

Aye, the people

Are bad from want. They 're worse off than  
the cattle:

The people have to watch

The black rain and it falling all the day.

FARDORROUGHA

We 've hay

For our own cows; give them a lock  
Of what the widow of Seumas saved.

PAUDEEN

Is it the hay

That's under the hurdles behind the hedge?

FARDORROUGHA

That hay:

She put lean beasts upon me, and she owes  
me

Their fattening.

*(Paudeen goes back to his place on the bench.  
Aislinn comes to the bin.)*

FARDORROUGHA

What child is this?

AISLINN

Aislinn is my name.

FARDORROUGHA

Who was it

Gave you that name? It is strange to name  
Anyone Dream!

AISLINN

My own people

Gave me that name. And now you'll wonder  
What brings me to your house. Sheila, your  
wife,

Has brought me here to keep her company.

FARDORROUGHA

And you are welcome. There are no young  
ones here.

AISLINN

I am well used

To doing things about a house, and I

Can sweep the floor, and put the fire down,  
And mind the children.

FARDORROUGHA

There are no children in the house you've  
come to:

Are you  
Afeard of me?

AISLINN

No, Fardorrougha, I'm not afeard.

FARDORROUGHA

You are like  
The brown bird in the cage, Aislinn.

AISLINN

What has Sheila  
Upon her altar? I would like to see:  
It is the image of the Mother of God!  
O why will the rain,  
Dear Mother of God, keep falling? It de-  
stroyed  
The crop, before the crop was out of the  
ground;  
Why will the black rain keep falling now?

*(Fardorrougha goes back to the bench.  
Sheila goes to Aislinn.)*

SHEILA

It is the will of God.

AISLINN

God's will is set  
Against us all; it is against  
The cattle in the field, and it was they  
Stood by His crib; they're moaning always  
now:  
He has forgotten them.

SHEILA

Do not be listening to  
The cattle moaning; do not be watching  
The black rain and it falling all the day.

AISLINN

You God has not forgotten.

SHEILA

God has not forgotten  
Me, Aislinn.

AISLINN

If He has left  
Your fields to the rain, He knows that you  
Have a good roof and riches under it.

SHEILA

To have them is no sign  
That God remembers one: I used to look  
Upon my roof and riches, and yet say  
"You have forgotten me, Almighty God!"

AISLINN

And could you say,  
When there was corn, "You have forgotten  
me,  
Almighty God?"

SHEILA

And when I would look  
Upon my fields and they heavy with the  
grain,  
"You have remembered the furrows," I  
would say,  
"And they are fruitful, but you have for-  
gotten  
Me, Almighty God!"

And now,  
Now when the furrows are forgotten, He,  
He has remembered me. O Aislinn, child,  
Your arms put round me—I would have you  
near:

I want

Your face before me; I would have a face  
Like yours, but glad; a child's face glad and  
bright!

*(Paudeen goes to the bin and opens it.)*

PAUDEEN

That's empty, and that will take some filling,  
too;

That's empty, and it will hold an apron-full;  
That's empty, and you can put more  
Than a cap-full in it.

SHEILA

What are you doing at the bin, Paudeen?

PAUDEEN

Making it ready to put corn in it.  
"Better have the corn in the bin," says he,  
"Than in the barn, after what happened  
Last night in the barn," says he.

SHEILA

What was it happened?

PAUDEEN

"And only Gorav," says he,  
"Only Gorav, the good dog, got the man by  
the throat,  
There would be a thief in the parish and a  
wronged man," says he.

SHEILA

The hard, hard man.

PAUDEEN

"There's a good door to my house," says he,  
"And the bin's within for corn; and if the  
priest," says he,

Can't put the fear of God into the people,  
Gorav, maybe, can," says he.

That's empty, that's empty, that's empty.

*(Paudeen goes back to his place on the bench.)*

SHEILA

He has all

The corn that's in the country, and he sets  
Brutes to guard it. The people bring their  
cattle

Before he gives them corn to keep them  
living.

AISLINN

I'm not afeared  
Of Fardorrougha.

SHEILA

He is not set  
In hardness yet; he'll give back  
In arm-fulls what he took in his hands!

AISLINN

Will it be long till then,  
Woman of Fardorrougha?

SHEILA

Not long, not long:

The fruit is ripening that will bring him to  
Himself; O Aislinn, do not think

Too hardly of my man; there was no child  
About our house, Aislinn!

*(Fardorrougha goes to the bin, bringing with  
him a bag of corn.)*

FARDORROUGHA

Woman of the house, be careful that you put  
The big bolt on the door when it gets dark.

SHEILA

Let it not come

Between you and your rest, Fardorrougha.

FARDORROUGHA

I grudge

To give them corn even for what they bring  
me.

SHEILA

Look at Aislinn here:

Would you not let it all go with the wind  
To have a child like Aislinn for your own?

FARDORROUGHA

Woman, content yourself  
With what is given.

SHEILA

God has given  
House and mill, and land and riches, but not  
Content.

FARDORROUGHA

Then let what is not  
Trouble us not.

SHEILA

Aislinn was with me all the day; Aislinn  
Will fill a bin for you. Aislinn, take  
A measure off the dresser, and help Fardor-  
rougha  
Empty the sack.

FARDORROUGHA

Aislinn! It was a woman surely  
That named her Dream.

SHEILA

She is a biddable child, and one that's good  
About a house.

FARDORROUGHA

She'll have no need  
To do much while she's here.

SHEILA

And isn't it well, Fardorrougha,  
To see a child that isn't white-faced?

FARDORROUGHA

The corn into the bin!

SHEILA

Isn't it a comfort

To see a child like Aislinn here? Then think  
Of a glad, bright child!

FARDORROUGHA

I have no thought

To go that far. That world, woman,  
The world of bud and blossom, has gone by:  
There's only now,  
The ragged sky, the poor and wasted ground,  
The broken-spirited ones—the people  
Like you, and me, and Paudeen.

SHEILA

No, Fardorrougha, no.

FARDORROUGHA

The world of bud and blossom has gone by.

SHEILA

No, Fardorrougha.

Listen to me, Fardorrougha!

FARDORROUGHA

Well, my woman.

SHEILA

I have something,  
Fardorrougha, to tell to you.

FARDORROUGHA

And I am listening, woman.

*(Paudeen goes to the bin.)*

PAUDEEN

Shaun o' the Bog is on the pass  
Before the barn.

FARDORROUGHA

Before the barn? Is it me he wants?

PAUDEEN

It's for the woman  
Of the house he's asking. "Is she by herself?"  
Says he to me.

FARDORROUGHA

She's not by herself, if that's the chance  
He's seeking. You, Sheila;  
There's something else you would have said,  
maybe,  
"Loose the corn you've gathered." Let you  
not,  
Or the harsh word that has not been, will be  
Between us.

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I'll see the man, and if he wants to make it  
A bargain that is fair, it's with myself  
That he must talk.

*(Fardorrougha goes back to the bench.  
Paudeen has some hay in his hands. He has  
taken it from under where he sat.)*

PAUDEEN

Where did he say

I was to put the hay I got under the hedge?

SHEILA

Where the cows are. O

How can your mind keep on the hay? I know:

It is because you're simple! Or so they say.

Paudeen,

Why do they call you a fool? Why

Do they call him a fool, Aislinn?

AISLINN

It is because

His mind keeps on the one thing only.

SHEILA

He can see only

The hay that's in his hands. But then

They are all foolish! Paudeen, they that  
gathered

Many thoughts while in the womb are foolish  
now

As you are.

PAUDEEN

But you said

I was a clean, well-built boy, anyhow,  
Woman of the house.

SHEILA

Yes, I said it.

*(Paudeen goes back to the bench.)*

AISLINN

I'm not afeard

Of Fardorrougha: I do not think him hard.

SHEILA

His heart opened to you.

AISLINN

He knows that I

Am not afeard of him.

SHEILA

His heart opened to you, and that's a sign:  
Yes, that's a sign I take.

AISLINN

And do you think that he would ever give  
The harsh word to you?

## The Miracle of the Corn 89

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SHEILA

O Aislinn, pray:

Pray that it will never come to that; the  
thought

Of the harsh word has come to me,

Again and again, like some dark bird.

AISLINN

And have you never had

The harsh word from him?

SHEILA

But now

The harsh word would be the end of all.

Listen to me! Outside 's the rain:

The desolation of the rain is near me:

If he gave me

The harsh word, the rain, the desolation

Would be all round me, and what fruit could  
be?

O glad, bright child of my dream! Apple  
blossom!

What fruit would you, tender and shining,  
make

And the tree of you with desolation round it?

*(The three women leave the bench and come  
to the bin. One has a child with her.)*

SHEILA

What can I do for you, women?

FIRST WOMAN

We have eaten

Only nettles and roots since the want came:  
Our children droop.

SECOND WOMAN

You do not know what it is  
To see a child droop.

THIRD WOMAN

God has not opened  
Doors of madness and pain for you.

*(Sheila takes a vessel and holds it to a child  
who drinks.)*

FIRST WOMAN

Do not forget my child.

SHEILA

Take

What is in my house, women.

*(She opens the bin and fills a woman's  
apron with corn. The other women hold out  
their aprons. Sheila fills them.)*

FIRST WOMAN

May God

Heap up store for you, and may you have  
Clan with store.

SECOND WOMAN

May God be with your husband when his  
hand

Scatters the seed, and may his labor be  
Prosperous!

THIRD WOMAN

And may your own labor be

Light, and watched by the Mother of God!

SHEILA

Women, who am I

That ye should pray for me!

*(The women go to the bench. Sheila stands  
quiet. Aislinn goes to her.)*

AISLINN

Now there is no more

O' the corn.

SHEILA

But God will have love

And pity for us.

AISLINN

The bins are emptied—will Fardorrougha  
...?

SHEILA

O hush!

There is the cattle's moan; here is Paudeen  
Who brings them hay—Paudeen who is  
With the broken things! My heart is heavy  
again!

AISLINN

Fardorrougha . . .

SHEILA

Fardorrougha! I had forgotten him:  
God protect me!

The rain, the rain! The black and ragged  
sky,

The poor and wasted ground—how could  
there be

Any but Paudeen's like.

*(Paudeen goes to the bin.)*

PAUDEEN

But you said

I was a clean and well-built boy yourself.

SHEILA

I said it. And now, Paudeen,  
Open the bins.

*(Paudeen lets down the fronts of the bin and  
it is shown to be empty.)*

PAUDEEN

O what will we tell  
Fardorrougha? Can any of you think  
Of a story to tell him?

SHEILA

We can tell him  
No story at all.

AISLINN

But we might  
Keep him from the bin.

SHEILA

No, Aislinn, no:  
No good would be in that.

It was the right I did. Their children now  
Around them crowd. O children, I would  
give  
Bread to you, again and over again!

I, too,  
Was one of them who had their minds upon  
The one thing only; I hardened  
To make things easy for myself. It is not  
"God protect me," I should be saying now,  
But "God forgive me."

*(Shaun o' the Bog comes from the bench. He goes to the bins.)*

SHAUN  
Fardorrougha told me  
To wait upon him here.

SHEILA  
And what has Fardorrougha  
Promised to you, Shaun?

SHAUN  
The corn in the bins. And I have given  
My wool and loom to him.

SHEILA  
He has not what he thinks he has, but you  
Will not go empty for all that.

SHAUN  
It is well for Aislinn,  
The child that's with you in this house.

SHEILA

Aislinn, go talk to Shaun; he need not be  
Anxious nor fretted.

AISLINN

Nor need you be  
Anxious nor fretted, Sheila.

SHEILA

I am not anxious any more, Aislinn.

*(Fardorrougha goes to the bin.)*

FARDORROUGHA

The corn is here that I will give you, Shaun,  
For wool and loom; open you the bin,  
And see how much is in it.

*(Shaun opens the bin. A very great quantity  
of corn gushes out.)*

FARDORROUGHA

I did not think  
So much was there. He'll not get all  
For wool and loom; I will not wrong my-  
self;  
As much as half is fair.

*(He turns to the bin and sees that Shaun,  
Sheila and Aislinn are kneeling beside the  
heap of corn.)*

FARDORROUGHA

Why are you kneeling, Shaun?

SHAUN

I kneel because I know  
My children will be fed.

FARDORROUGHA

Why are you kneeling, Sheila?

SHEILA

I kneel because I know  
The fields will break to corn because of the  
    love,  
And pity God has for us.

FARDORROUGHA

Why are you kneeling, Aislinn?

AISLINN

I kneel because I know  
A miracle has happened; Sheila need not  
    dread  
The harsh word from you any more or never.

FARDORROUGHA

An air comes from it all—a smell of growing,  
Green, growing corn; and I mind that I  
Brought Sheila from her mother's to this  
    house

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Across a field of corn that smelled sweet,  
sweet,  
And whispered lovingly. I'm greatly  
changed,  
And often I am strange even to myself.  
What good's in what I've gathered? It's  
between  
Myself and her; but when she rises now  
Nothing will be between us; at what she'll  
say  
All I have gathered I shall give away.

*(With Sheila, Aislinn, and Shaun still  
kneeling the scene closes.)*



## NOTES

## 1. The Rune Master

Kuno Meyer died in Germany in the autumn of 1919. In the poem written on the announcement of his death, his translation of the dialogue between King Guire and his hermit brother Maravaun ("King and Hermit") is referred to, with his translation of "The Voyage of Bran" and one of the poems in his "Ancient Irish Poetry" called "The Tryst after Death."

## 2. Wandering and Sojourning

The two poems given under this title are translations from the Irish: The first, "Spring," is from the Irish of Raftery, a Connacht poet of the eighteenth century, and the second, "Autumn," is a versification of a passage in Kuno Meyer's translation of a mediaeval tale.

## 3. The Poor Girl's Meditation

The original and a literal translation are given by Dr. Douglas Hyde in his "Love Songs of Connacht."

## 4. The Wife of Tone

This and the two pieces that follow were written for famous Irish airs—the first to the beautiful melody that is known as "The Londonderry Air," and the other two to the airs that give titles to them. "The Fair Hills of Eire" freely translates the first and last stanzas of the famous eighteenth century poem of exile, and "Shall I Go Bound and You Go Free" is derived from the first line of a folk song that is given in one of Mr. Herbert Hughes' collections. The words of "The Wife of Tone" paraphrase what the wife of Theobald Wolfe Tone, the leader of the United Irishmen, wrote in her journal on her parting with her son; in accordance with her husband's wish he had been brought up to take service with an army that was engaged in a war of national liberation.

## 5. The Laments of Queen Gormlai

These are renderings of four out of the eleven "Poems Attributed to Queen Gormlaith," text and literal translations of which have been given by Professor Osborn Bergin. The poem on the burial of Niall has been nobly translated by Dr. Sigerson in his "Bards of the Gael and Gall" and by Dr. Douglas Hyde in his "Literary History of Ireland." The poems are in lamentation for the death of Niall Black-knee and for her own state of dependence in a Leinster household, away from her husband's Ulster kingdom. Niall Black-knee was killed near Dublin, in a battle with the Norse in 917. His wife Gormlaith lived for thirty-one years after his death. Professor Bergin declares that if the poems were actually written by Gormlaith they were altered afterward.







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